1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

fifty was likely to be left a widow by him within the next fifteen years, and even if she remarried a man of the same age as her first husband, she could easily be widowed for the second time while still herself a comparatively young woman. There were several different patterns, most of them intermingled in the same household, for a female matrimonial career, but the situation may be illustrated by the concrete case of one of Turimpi's widows, an ancient crone (in 1930) named Bongdadu. Born about 1865, she was betrothed at birth to a powerful old man named Walitaumi who was at least the same age as her father, if not older. Not unnaturally, he died while she was still a child and well before she was old enough to join his household. Her betrothal was then reassigned, so to speak, to Walitaumi's half-brother, Turimpi, then in his early forties. About seven years later, she joined Turimpi's household as a blushing bride of fourteen, her husband then being close to fifty. In the next twenty years she became Turimpi's most prolific wife and bore numerous children, three of whom, Antonio, Mariano, and Louis, all born between 1883 and 1900, were men of importance in Tiwi politics in 1930, and one of whom, Louis, is still alive today.[6] Around 1900, when Bongdadu was still only about thirty-five, she passed to M., a middle-aged Tiklauila, and was his wife until his death around 1925. By this date, Bongdadu was over sixty and had borne ten children, four of whom died young. Not unnaturally, she was beginning to approach the hag or crone stage of Tiwi womanhood. Nonetheless, she had to remarry, but by now all of the people who might have claimed any rights of bestowal in her were long since dead, her eldest sons were adult men of some importance and able to protect their mother's interests, and clearly she was unlikely to produce any more children.[7] Her chief value was as a food producer and housekeeper and female politician, roles for which she had been well trained in her long years as wife of Turimpi and M.

Old women in Bongdadu's position had to remarry, but they were in a good position to exercise some choice of their own as to whom they remarried, especially if they had strong influential sons to support them in their wishes. There was a frequent pattern in such cases for the widow, aided and abetted (or perhaps even forced) by her sons, to arrange a marriage of convenience with some obscure nonentity much younger than herself and usually a friend or contemporary of her sons. In 1925, then, Bongdadu, widowed three times already, married as her fourth husband one Dominico, a man of no importance whatever, as was shown by the fact that at this time he was nearly forty and had not been able to attract even one bestowed wife. He had, however, already married one widow, so that his marriage to Bongdadu gave

[6] Tiwi personal names are polysyllabic and hard for the reader to remember; hence, wherever possible, we have used "whiteman names" for individuals. The frequency of Spanish names among these "whiteman names," such as Mariano or Dominico, derives from the fact that the original buildings for the Mission Station were built by a number of Filipino workmen whom the priests brought with them.

[7] The Tiwi saw no inconsistency between believing in spirit impregnation and believing at the same time that an old woman was unlikely to bear children. It was to them a matter of probabilities, and of course with them as with us, occasionally an elderly lady did—disconcertingly—have a baby, proving the logic of their position.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

CHAPTER III

The Pukamuni Ceremony

765 The burial ceremonies of the aborigines of Melville and Bathurst Islands,
182 based on the *pukamuni* of the mythical man, *Purukupali*, are, by far, the most important events in their ceremonial life.

These ceremonies, which allow the aborigines full expression for their grief, provide, at the same time, a complete cultural outlet for their philosophical beliefs, their music, their art and their dancing. No one, watching these
[781] primitive rituals, night after night, could fail to be impressed by the obvious pleasure experienced by both the participants and the onlookers.

114 Spencer (1928, pp. 647–52), is the only investigator to describe and illus-
765 trate any details of the *pukamuni* ceremony. Although he saw but one day of the ceremonials, and that of the closing rituals, he records, briefly, many of the procedures which we witnessed in 1954, i.e., the rite of fire-jumping (p. 73), the spearing of the grave (p. 83), and (p. 89), the "spearing" of one of the participants and the erecting of the poles. This evidence shows
177 that, in spite of the disturbing effects of civilization and the complete
765 ecclesiastical ban on Bathurst Island, the *pukamuni* ceremony is still a vital force in the lives of the Tiwi people.

123 During the six months the expedition was on Melville Island, Miss Jane Goodale, Mr. W. E. Harney and I witnessed some, or all of the rituals of four *pukamuni* ceremonies; one of a man, *Waniamperi*, who had been buried within half a mile of our camp; another of an old woman, *Makapini*, who, against the wishes of her relatives, had been buried in the mission cemetery on Bathurst Island; still another of a premature infant; and, only a few weeks before I left Melville Island, one of *Nulatini*, the deceased wife of our helper, *Pulanimbuwi*.

123 I will describe the burials of *Waniamperi* and *Nulatini*, and the final rituals
of *Waniamperi* and *Makapini*. However, as we saw, in all, twenty-seven
128 *ilanias*, the general pattern of which was similar, I will describe but five of them; three belonging to *Waniamperi*, one to *Makapini* and one to *Nulatini*.[44] The short rituals, associated with the dead infant, will be treated as a separate unit.

[44] The final rituals took place after my departure from Melville Island. These will be dealt with by Miss Goodale.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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(2) *The Ilanias of Nulatini*

We were able to see the opening mourning rituals, *iramparimi*[38] of *Nulatini* and six of her *ilanias*.

Rather than deal with all of these ceremonies in detail, I will describe the *iramparimi* rituals and a typical *ilania*, in which the aborigines carried out all phases of the rituals, with the exception of the appointment of the "workers". Although the rite of *punuti*, *wandiatapinda*, or feeding the "workers", did not take place at every *ilania*, they will be included in this description.

(a) *The Opening Mourning Ritual, Iramparimi of Nulatini*

Ten days after the burial of *Nulatini*, the aborigines of Melville Island performed the ritual of *iramparimi*. The function of that ceremony was to express grief over *Nulatini's* death, and to tell her spirit that, as she did not now belong to the same realm as themselves, she must leave her grave and return to her totemic country.

The ceremony was held about thirty yards from the camp of the dead woman. Most of the aborigines were present, but two men, *Pulanimbuwi*, the husband, and *Tupiatira*, *Nulatini's* nearest relative, took the leading parts.

The rituals opened in the late afternoon with *Pulanimbuwi*, painted in white, elaborately decorated and carrying a long stick, walking slowly toward the assembled people, singing the *amburu*, the women's song of mourning (Pl. 23A).

Every now and again, the husband stopped, leaned on his stick and looked round (apparently for his wife's *mopaditi*), before continuing on his way to the place of ceremony.

Coming out of the forest in an almost opposite direction was *Tupiatira*, also painted in white, waving green branches in his hands. About fifty yards from the old camp of *Nulatini*, *Tupiatira* called her name loudly, and, after listening for a while, announced that, as she had not answered, she must be dead.

As *Tupiatira* walked forward he continued to call, while *Pulanimbuwi*, now accompanied by his sister, *Kundi*, came in from the opposite direction, both singing the *amburu*. When the men were only a few yards apart the aborigines formed themselves into two lines, facing each other.

At a signal and a loud "*Book, book*" from *Pulanimbuwi*, an old man, *Malumerinita*, accompanied by six to eight of the men, danced between the

[38] The *iramparimi* of *Wantamperi* was performed before our arrival.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

on sheets of paper to illustrate the body markings used at each stage of initiation.

To give a complete account of the full *kulama* which included initiation as well as the preparation of the yam for food, I have included both groups of rituals, as they would have been performed in the original *kulama* ceremony. However, it must be borne in mind that we witnessed only the rituals belonging to the *kulama* yam. As stated before, the details of initiation were obtained from the fully initiated men.

I. THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN

(1) *The first Kulama Ceremony*

During *palaneri* (creation) times, not long before the death of *Purukupali*, when all the animals and birds were still men and women, *Purutjikini*, a boobook owl-man, and his wife, *Pintoma*, a barn owl-woman, decided to perform the first *kulama* ceremony at Turiturina, in Port Hurd, south-western Bathurst Island (Fig. 1). They invited *Jirakati*, later the white-headed sea-eagle, and *Tupatupini*, the small owl, to be present, planning to make them the first initiates. Many other people assisted in the ceremony, the *Ningauis*, a small spirit people who still live in the mangrove swamps nearby; *Inwati*, *Mauwini* and *Taparalili*, three groups of the honey people; *Jirakupai*, the sea-going crocodile; *Narina*, the black cockatoo, and *Jurumu*, the wedge-tailed eagle.

Tukimbini, *Wuriuprinili* and a number of ancestral people from the eastern end of Melville Island, being opposed to the holding of the *kulama* ceremony, did not attend.

At the ceremony, the white-headed eagle, *Jirakati*, was the first *Wadjeniati* initiate (he still wears the ceremonial paint), and the owl, *Tupatupini*, the first *Mikinatrina*. There is no mention in the creation myths of the other grades of initiation.

When the first *kulama* ceremony was finished[18] the participants returned to their homes until the *pukamuni* of *Purukupali*, which was performed at the end of the *palaneri* (creation period). It was then that *Purutjikini*, the leader

[18] Some informants referred to a fight which took place at the first *kulama* in which *Purutjikini* was attacked because he did not wait for some late-comers. Others described another quarrel which started when one of the *kulama* men followed a woman of the Kaiakumruniri group into the mangrove swamps and raped her so badly that she died.

The Kaiakumruniri people attacked the performers of the *kulama*, killing some and driving others into the mangrove swamps where they live today as the *Ningauis*. The more elderly informants, *Tjamalampua* and *Makumirinita*, however, said that there were no quarrels at the first *kulama*.

10:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1962 O120 Tiwi O120

Marriage Contracts Among the Tiwi

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It has become an increasingly common practice in recent years to reëxamine earlier analyses of kinship systems and, by selecting slightly different criteria from the ethnographic descriptions or by approaching the system from a different point of reference, to arrive at new interpretations and classifications. This has been particularly true of studies of Australian kinship systems, which have been a fertile field for reinterpretation ever since the day of Spencer and Gillen. Two of the many examples are the reëxamination of the Kariera by Romney and Epling (1958) and the reanalysis of the Wikmunkan by Needham (1962).

No one has yet attempted a reanalysis of the Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst Islands for the simple reason that none of the original investigators has yet attempted a complete preliminary analysis. Spencer visited Bathurst Island in 1912 and subsequently published a few comments and a list of kinship terms (Spencer 1914). Hart visited the Tiwi in 1928-29 and Pilling in 1953-54, and their highly readable joint book (Hart and Pilling 1960) has brought the Tiwi into prominence but has not solved the theoretical problems raised by their description of the social organization and marriage customs. I, too, visited the Tiwi in 1954[1] and ever since have been continually frustrated in attempts to describe their social organization and marriage rules in conventional anthropological terminology.

I have long been convinced—and I believe Hart and Pilling are also so convinced—that the first step in understanding Tiwi social organization is an understanding of Tiwi marriage customs. Accordingly, this paper was first written as an analysis of Tiwi marriage contracts using the age factor as a major underlying determinant of asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage rules.[2] When the original paper was read, at the Tenth Pacific Science Congress in 1961, comments from the floor convinced me that fuller descriptions of certain aspects of Tiwi social organization should be included. After the paper was rewritten to include these aspects, the colleagues[3] who read and commented on it asked for more complete and different data, for each saw in the description different possibilities for abstraction and classification.

I have therefore resolved that this paper shall be mainly descriptive rather than analytical. The first section deals with a description of Tiwi marriage contracts with the main emphasis on the factor of relative age as an important consideration. The data, it should be

10:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1962 O120 Tiwi O120

emphasized, are presented from the point of view of a female Ego, for I strongly feel that it is only by using a female Ego that one can see the Tiwi marriage "game" as a "system." Following this, I present the kinship terminology together with some comments on the system of kin classification that are relevant to the marriage system. The last section discusses some aspects of the exchange of women between descent groups and local groups.

I am only too well aware that I do not have all the facts necessary to make a complete analysis of Tiwi social organization. It must also be stated that the relative-age analysis was a desk study based largely on what I believe to be logical deductions from the collected factual information pertaining to the age differences between spouses.[4] More field work is obviously necessary, and I hope that others who become interested in the problems of analysis and classification raised by this paper will comment and thereby suggest what they consider to be crucial areas for reinvestigation.

The Factor of Relative Age in Marriage Contracts

Hart and Pilling (1960) have described the dynamic nature of Tiwi marriage contracts from the point of view of a male Ego. My study supports their conclusion that for a Tiwi male the acquisition of wives and the acquisition of prestige are dependant variables. A Tiwi male will rarely acquire a wife through any form of contract before the age of 30. A bestowed wife, one who is promised before birth and becomes a cohabiting wife before puberty, is a valuable prestige symbol, but difficult to acquire. Thus a young man will frequently start his household with the acquisition of a less valuable but more easily obtainable type of wife, i.e., a widow, often of advanced age. Some Tiwi males never obtain sufficient prestige or political power to become involved in a bestowal contract, while others who are more fortunate may be involved in several such contracts.

My study of Tiwi marriage contracts from the point of view of a female Ego reveals some interesting differences in perspective. First and foremost is the fact that, while involvement in a bestowal contract is a cultural ideal, albeit rarely realized, for a male's first marriage, it is an inescapable norm for every Tiwi woman's first marriage. Thus, while this type of contract can be considered "preferential" but not normative from the point of a male Ego, it is acknowledged by Tiwi women as an inflexible "rule" governing their first marriage before puberty to a man whom they describe as "the one who grew me up, treated me like a father, and made me a woman."[5]

Thus a marriage contract for a man's first wife need not be—and frequently is not—the same as the initial contract leading to a girl's primary marriage. Furthermore, the form of the contract for a man's first wife is apt to vary considerably, whereas the form of the initial

[5] [The Tiwi believe that sexual intercourse is the direct and only cause of menarche. Cf. p. 465, ant. 116 -- Analyst.]